{ See Note at end. }

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THE IDEAL ELEMENT IN MORALITY.

Lecture given before the Society for Ethical Culture of Chicago, January 9, 1884, by

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The current views of morality are low and conventional. Even the churches, who should inspire us with an ideal view of life, talk of "mere morality." Morality is thought to have no mystery about it.* Worship is contrasted with it.† A celebrated English preacher says, "Sometimes, losing sight of divine and eternal things, Christianity becomes a moral discipline without the inspiration of religious awe and love and hope and fear."‡ Morality itself, then, is not one of those divine and eternal things; there is nothing about it to touch the soul with love or awe, with hope or fear. The most gifted genius in the Chicago pulpit says of an earlier day, "Nor was it ethics which the children studied in the Sunday-school, but it was always the deep things of eternity, and not the equities and amenities of this world."§ Ethics is not then one of those deep things, but only an affair of this passing world, an amenity of human life. Yes, it is often said that morality cannot itself live save as it is grounded in religion, that it is but a branch from the vigorous root of religion.*

Now in contrast with these conventional views, I wish to bring out the ideal meaning of morality. I wish to show that it brings before us great thoughts; and thoughts touching the deep places of the soul; I wish to show that there is something in it which lays hold of eternity, that it may well, and does in all but the coarsest natures, stir awe, and love, and hope, and fear; I wish to show that religion, the only true religion—though it nowhere exists now—is but the blossoming out of morality, that morality is its root instead of being a branch from the root of religion. And I am particularly anxious to show this to the satisfaction of

*Natural Religion, p. 132; cf. the passage on p. 133, "At this point it is, at this disappointing identification of religion with morality, that the breach takes place Can, then, religion mean no more than that we should *pay our debts, keep our engagements, and not be too hard on our enemies?*" (Italics are ours.) This is all then that morality means!

†Ditto, p. 134

‡R. W. Dale, Contemporary Review, April 1883.

§Prof. David Swing, reported in Chicago *Inter Ocean* Dec. 3, 1883.

*So Channing, in early life (Life, A. U. A. ed., p. 74): but later he wrote, "To love God is to love morality in its most perfect form," and the office of religion is not to raise us "to something higher than morality," but to give us "sublime ideas of morality" (Life, pp. 230, 231). The conventional view is well brought out in "Something Above Morality," by Rev. Richard Metcalf, a tract published by the American Unitarian Association Boston.

those who are not accustomed to what are called idealistic modes of thought.

Let me distinctly say at the outset that the ideal view of morality, with which I am now concerned, has nothing to do with idealism in philosophy. There is no reason why the philosophical realist, or even materialist, should not join me in what I shall say of morality. As matter of fact, I find as much moral idealism among those who call themselves materialists as among any other class of people. Think for a moment of the revolutionists in Russia,—most of them young men and women, to whom you could not offer greater affront than to call them idealists.* They are materialists, they do not believe in a God or a future life; the world of the senses is alone real to them. Yet where do they place their hope? In what they see, in what their senses can lay hold of, in the actual order of social and political life that forever confronts them? No, but in something they do not see, in something that is not and never has been in Russia,—an era of freedom, an era of democracy, an era of brotherhood. So long as this era is not, 'tis but a possibility, an idea. And for that possibility, for that idea, they leave sometimes high rank and station, become frequently almost ascetics in their mode of life, and are ready to go to Siberia or the scaffold. Nothing, not life itself, is so dear to them as the idea, the dream of their imaginations and their hearts.

Nor is moral idealism inconsistent with the utilitarian theory of the origin and sanction of our moral ideas. Utilitarianism says that our notions of right and wrong do not come from some magical intuition or revelation, but arise in the natural course of human experience and development, and that morality has its ultimate sanction in its tendency to promote the general good, the universal happiness. I am not concerned with this or any other theory to-day, but with the content of morality, the ideal nature of which is often so faintly realized. As matter of fact, utilitarians are as often idealists, in the sense in which I am now using the word, as the advocates of any other theory of morality. Jeremy Bentham is called the father of modern utilitarianism; yet what greater reformer has England had during the last hundred years, in legislation, politics, prison discipline, and education, than Bentham? Of him and James Mill it has been well said, that "Believing that theory was all powerful, that no hard and fast line could be drawn between the theoretically sound and the practically feasible, and that every simple and intelligible system only required energy and determination to convert it at once into a body of maxims and motives, they set to work in all directions with undaunted applications of their brand new doctrines to the crude material of fact."* This is the very spirit of idealism, as I am concerned with it at this time. Reform is essentially idealistic. Every reformer takes his stand not with what is, but with what he conceives ought to be; not with the customs and traditions and institutions that have come down from the past, but with the ideas that he believes must rule in the future; successful reform means, indeed, conquering a fact by an idea.

Nor, in speaking of the ideal meaning of morality, in trying to show that it calls us away from what we see and know, to what we can only think of, let me be understood as endeavoring to transcend the realm of the human mind. Shakspere is involved in the same apparent contradiction when he speaks of

".....thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."†

But moral ideas, however much they may contrast with reality, are thoughts of the human mind. To win them and to live in them is not to lose ourselves, but to enlarge ourselves. We are not merely so much space as is covered by our bodies, but minds that can take in the past and the future, that can wander over the earth and climb to the stars, that can muse on what is and think of the better that might be. There is no outside to the mind; the grandest, divinest, most per-

*M. Leroy-Beaulieu in Lalor's Cyclopedia of Political Science, article, "Nihilism."

*G. S. Bower's Hartley and James Mill, p. 227; see also Maine's Ancient Law, p. 75.

†Hamlet, act I. scene 4.

fect things are simply *thoughts* of what may be.

With these explanations let me proceed to my task. What are more natural and commonplace experiences with us than our wishes and wants? But if we reflect a moment it is easy to see that they have an ideal significance. We do not wish for what we have or for what we are already; we wish for what we have not or are not, for what we are without, for what, in the literal sense, we *want*. What is then the wished-for object but a possibility or an idea? If we stop to think, all our wishes and wants go out to ideas. It may seem strange that we should often set more store by what is not than by what is. Why should we, it may be asked. We cannot answer save by saying that it seems a part of our nature to do so. As it belongs to us to hear and see, so it does to think of what we do not hear or see, to be discontented, to reach out, to form ideals. Perhaps it is a provision for progress, for life, for movement. For if one is conscious of no wants, if he has no wishes, nor ideals, what is he practically but dead, without an incentive to movement, without the possibility even of becoming more than he is?

But our ideas are of two kinds. It is a long ways from a child's craving for a doll or a sled to a young man's or a young woman's desire to lead a pure, blameless life, or the mature person's craving to see justice reflected in the general arrangements of society. There is a difference, indeed, all through life between our longings after what we may call happiness, comfort, prosperity, enjoyment and those after goodness, unselfishness and purity. We cannot say we ought to be happy, but only we should like to be; but we do say that we ought to be good, and this even if we do not wish to be, if our matter-of-fact desires chance at any moment to be clean of a contrary sort. In a word, the note of authority seems to go along with a certain class of ideas. We live amid ideas to the extent that we really live at all; but some of the ideas we simply crave, and others seem to bind us; some we can make a goal of our lives, if we choose, and others seem fixed for us,—so that we cannot turn from them without inwardly experiencing some kind of disgrace. There is no necessary dishonor in not having a home and a family, or in not entering on a business career. But with a home, to be unfaithful to it, or in business, to forget the laws of truth and honor there, is morally blameworthy. To read this or that book on a leisure afternoon, if we are so fortunate as to have one, or to leave our books altogether and go out for a stroll, or, once out, to turn our steps along this street or that,—there is nothing to bind us in any of these alternatives; it may be that no one is better than another; the only "better" may be to suit our mood, to do according to our own sweet will. But often we are in the face of alternatives, one of which has a distinct urgency about it; we know it to be better even though we do not choose it; it seems to have a claim upon us whether we will or no, and our real task is not to wait and see if our natural choice will not change, but to change it, to choose ever the true and the good. Now those ideas, from out the countless number that throng our minds, that have this urgency about them, that are intrinsically better and seem to constrain us, we call moral ideas, the sum of them make what we call morality.

Morality is thus in essence ideal. It is not what men do, but what they ought to do; not what they wish, but what they ought to wish. It is as with truth. Truth is not what one happens to think; it is not this or that belief which one may cherish, but that which corresponds to the fact of things. And with art. A picture or a statue is not a work of art because the brush or the chisel have been used in producing it, but because it reflects in some degree the ideal of the beautiful. Let me use some very simple illustrations of the ideal nature of morality. Happily, kindliness belongs by a gift of nature to most men. It finds a special field of operation in the home, where others are brought so near to us. How much sweeter and more beautiful is the life of the family wherein kindliness is the law! But suppose that in some

family this ceases to be the law, that some member of it forgets to show this spirit, that he comes to easily lose his temper, and becomes irritable, surly and cross; and that this affects the life of the family, and the quiet, genial kindliness that was wont to be there goes and leaves faint traces of itself. Do we hesitate to say that kindliness is still the true ideal for that family, that though it is no longer there, it ought to be there, and all should be pervaded with its spirit? Because the facts have come to be contrary to the ideal, have we now doubt about the ideal itself? Surely not. What difference does it make that mankind has come from a time of unspeakable barbarism in the past, when there was no kindliness and no ideal of it,—if men have learned the ideal, if many have still to learn it, if the practice of the best of us hardly corresponds to our ideal, if the ideal itself may grow completer and finer? The only question is, is it not a true ideal, could there have been progress in the past in any other direction than toward it, is it possible that there can be any progress in the future that is away from it? No, the family life of man may go actually in one way or another, but it can only go one way and go right. There is an ideal for it that we cannot conceive as changing.

Or take an illustration from the political life of men. The prime concern of a State should be for justice. I do not say this has been the case or that it is perfectly so now. The State has often stood simply for power. The head of the State has often made others his slaves, — they have held property, even life, at his mercy. But does any one hesitate to say that the State should stand for justice, that this makes an ideal for it, that there can be progress in only one direction, that if the State comes to be in the possession of men or classes of men, who rule for their own and not for the general good, this would be retrogression? Suppose that any government now makes a distinction between those who are equally men, but are of different color; or that, in effect, it has one law for the rich and another, or none, for the poor; should we not hear something within us calling and demanding that this be changed? Is there not something commanding, something imperative in the thought of universal justice? Justice, — it is a commonplace word. But is it even in our democratic republic a commonplace thing? What is it, then? It is an idea, — and one which, though it were never realized, would not cease to give the ideal, and the only ideal for human government. Not all the tyrants of the past, and no will or combined will of the mightiest to-day can change it. The supreme political problem is to find it out completely, and to establish it perfectly; and if human governments do not establish it, not the idea, but they will be humbled and cast down. He who stands by justice — let him be aware of it — and who stands the firmer and speaks the louder when justice seems to fail, stands by an idea. Let him keep his faith, though it does fail, for in truth justice might never be on this earth, and yet not lose one particle of its ideal worth and its ideal authority.

Or take an illustration from business life. What honorable man does not place truth before success in business? Who does not feel that he ought to be truthful, whether it will be advantageous to him or not? Who does not feel that truth gives the ideal for business life, and own it in his thoughts, if not in his practice, — and want to know how business can be arranged, so that there will not be even the semblance of a necessity for anything else? What is many a man's secret disturbance about the matter but a kind of confession that the idea ought to rule, that something he catches a glimpse of within is in its nature commanding and authoritative, and that with it he must somehow make peace? What matters it that men once had little or no notion of truthfulness, that they have learned it, that many have still to learn it, that it is still an ideal, and in advance of the general practice of men? I only ask, is our confidence in it any less on these accounts? Is not progress only towards it? Is not all departure from it retrogression, — though men should cease to own it even in the scant measure they do now,

would they not be culpably, unmistakably in the wrong?

And so with all the institutions of society and all the relations of human life, — there is an ideal and a law for them; and for each and every separate one, an ideal and a law fitted to its particular nature and constitution. For the family, for the State, for business in all their departments, there is a true and perfect way of conducting them; for every individual life there is an ideal which it is to find and follow. For even if we have not grasped the ideal, we believe that it is there. We know that we do not make and cannot change the conditions of bodily health, that we have to learn them, that there is indeed an ideal method of living, which would insure to every one who would follow it perfect physical health and strength. We believe that the conditions of social welfare and prosperity, the sources of peace and satisfaction for each individual soul are equally fixed. There is some form of society which would secure universal well-being; there is some ideal type of thinking, feeling and acting that would, when realized, make a perfect human being. We know the law that makes this marvel of order, this regularity, this punctuality, this movement without jar in the outward world. How simple and yet how far-reaching is the law of gravitation! But the law that would turn this chaos of human life into a cosmos, we do not know. It differs from the law of gravitation very plainly, in that it does not act necessarily. If it did, we should have already an order here comparable to that we see above. But we have to discover it, and when we have discovered it we have to give it the free consent of our wills. We have indeed already gained some notion of it. We know to a certain extent what makes for order and peace among men. What we call the moral ideal is so much of it as we know. But how much more is there yet to know! Even the idea of justice, which is the best part of our moral ideal — who understands it, who fathoms it, who sees all that it means and must mean, to the future?

Ethics calls us away to these visions of the higher and the better. It is a science of life, not as it is, but as it ought to be, as it would be if it were transfigured with its idea. It means looking at life from the highest standpoint, it means unhesitatingly taking our stand there and fearing not to criticise the actual life of men according to the ideal standard. It may be no welcome task to pass judgment on ourselves, yet if we are real in the matter of moral culture, I do not see how we can avoid doing so. If we have given away to unworthy passion, if we have done an ungenerous thing, if for selfish reasons we have broken a promise, if in any way we have followed the lower rather than the higher reason, let us not treat the matter as of no consequence, but remember it and judge ourselves for it; yes, better in some way try and atone for it than pass it by with indifference. Still less welcome is it to pass judgment upon others. How easy to excuse a friend where we would not excuse ourselves! How hard to have any one whom we love sink in our estimation! The question is, which comes first, loyalty to a person or to truth? I am sure that while there is often not enough of charity in the world, there is also much false charity; and that while nothing is more uncalled for than censoriousness, and the presuming to be keeper of another's conscience, and that at no time are we so called to purify ourselves of all mere personal feeling as when we judge of another; yet, when truth compels us, we should judge, remembering that not out of any personal regard are we to forget the requirements of the ideal standard.

And as we read history we are to take our moral judgment with us. How great the temptation will often be to abandon our moral convictions, so frequently do the facts of history seem to do violence to them. "Right forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne," how does the sense of this make us almost doubt at times whether there is any right and is any wrong, whether our ideas of right instead of unalterable laws of human action are not entirely relative and conventional

things, or even illusory. These are the temptations of the moral idealist. Refreshing are the words of those who do not fail in their moral convictions, however poorly these may be confirmed by the actual course of history. You have heard of the saying of Seneca in regard to the Roman Consul, Sulla, that his fortune was "the crime of the gods."* I confess to an unbounded admiration for it. Though it savors of impiety, it hides what is to my mind the deepest and the only piety. For what was the history, and particularly the end of that man, —starting as he did with a fortune given him by a courtesan, making his way by the help of it over thousands of the wronged and slain to the arbitrary dictatorship of his city, in old age, with ambition sated, retiring from office to his villa to practice again the voluptuous habits of his youth, and then finally dying peacefully, his funeral attended by hundreds, whom he had captivated by his recklessness, and whose minds he had debauched, — what is all this but a satire on every sentiment of justice? Do we wonder that a writer has said — "history alone could have dared to tell us of a peaceful end to such a life of his, and history, again and again, repeats the defiance to our moral sense."† Was it not natural for Seneca, with the popular view of the gods as guiding and ruling in the affairs of men, to say that this good fortune of Sulla's was the crime of the gods? What grand impiety, — what a measuring not only of men but of gods by the standard of moral ideas! For this is ever the test of the true man — will he yield up his ideal conviction to any amount of contrary facts; will he take his stand and keep it *contra mundum*, and though the ruling powers of the world, visible and invisible, were opposed to him? To lose the sense of an ideal right, to yield it up before a show of might, — that is the only infidelity, the only atheism we need have any fear of. Then, indeed, a fairer world than that we see about us, the world of moral truth and moral beauty, would be shattered and broken, and in the ruins it were hardly worth while to live. And in this feeling, though I would stand alone, I do not stand alone, and have the company of men called utilitarians and materialists as well as many others.

*Lecky's History of Morals, I., 259.

†Contemporary Review, Feb. 1881, article on "The Moral Influence of George Eliot."

You remember, some of you — I am sorry I have it not at hand to quote — John Stuart Mill's eloquent outburst against the deity, who would condemn a pure-minded upright man because he could not believe in certain theological dogmas, to the punishments of hell, saying if that were so, to hell he would go. A passage from Huxley reveals the same noble holding of moral distinctions.* "For suppose theology established the existence of an evil deity, — and some theologians, even Christian ones, have come very near this; is the religious affection to be transferred from the ethical ideal to any such omnipotent demon? I trow not. Better a thousand times that the human race should perish under his thunderbolts than it should say, 'Evil be thou my good.'"

But with all the most discouraging facts in the world, there is no evidence that the ultimate powers of the world are evil. Only those who deny freedom and responsibility to man and affix all blame for whatever is wrong upon the ultimate nature of things, can call that ultimate nature evil. Let responsibility for wrong be fixed where it belongs, on the human doers of it, and the sky is cleared of the hideous spectre of an evil god, and the ideals of justice and of goodness come naturally to be regarded as the voice of the ultimate nature of things; and obedience to them and working for them against whatever odds, against whatever show of might may be on the side of wrong and evil, as the truest, the deepest, nay the only piety. The only mistake would be in thinking that those ideals will be accomplished by some power outside ourselves, in thinking of a providential justice and goodness. In truth, so far as we can see, there is no such providential justice and goodness, and the

*Critiques and Addresses, p. 49.

Christian belief is just as mythical to us as the old Roman belief. There were no such gods as Seneca pictured, and there is no such being as the Christian believes in. Justice and goodness have power not outside of us, but in our minds; they are to rule the world, if ever they do, as we surrender ourselves to them and make them rule; yet they are authoritative, they are binding, they are set fast for us in the nature of things, and by the nature of things; and when all notions of a providential deity are gone, they but shine clearer in their own light, and evidence something in which they are rooted that can never go, that is eternal and unchangeable. Some time humanity will be so aroused to its own true place and calling in the world that such a life and such a death as Sulla's could never happen; society will be so ordered, individuals will be so treated and judged that a man like Sulla would have no chance of rising, or if he had, would die in universal contempt. The fortune of Sulla was the crime of the Roman people; society will always have such monsters of iniquity till it purges itself,—and the task set for it, the task from which it cannot escape (unless it too is to rot and die), is to purge itself; and religion, the only religion the future can have, would be a voluntary dedication on the part of society to that task.

Alphonso of Castile's words have a charm like those of Seneca. "If he had been present at the creation, he could have given some useful hints for the better ordering of the universe." Ah, if Alphonso had only realized that a part of creation was there in his own power to refashion, if he would. The responsibility for the unequal order of society that prevailed in the middle age, when he lived, was not chargeable on the Creator, but on men themselves, and particularly on those lords and princes, to the number of which Alphonso belonged. He might easily have given a better ordering to his little part of the universe, and set an example to the other princes about him, whereby oppressions and robberies and all manner of despoilings of the weak by the strong might have in some measure ceased.

It is strange, when we bear in mind the ideal nature of morality, to hear that morality must be based upon facts. Morality is not really a question of facts, but of the right of facts to be, of their correspondence with a standard of the mind. For all scientific hypotheses we must look for a foundation in the world as it is; for they are nothing but attempted explanations of the actual order of things; we believe in them more or less, as there is more or less of evidence from facts in their favor. But morality is in its nature an ideal and a rule, and we can account for many of the phenomena of history and of human life to-day only on the supposition that morality was not and is not heeded, and perhaps not even thought of. Base morality on facts? Which facts? There are innumerable facts, an induction from which would only give us immorality. The good facts, then? But plainly, this is moving in a circle. In truth, that is nothing on which to base morality. We do not so much find it, as demand it in the world.* All the separate moral rules may be resolved into the supreme one, to seek the general welfare, the universal good. But who can give a reason for the supreme rule? Indeed, no serious man wants a reason. The supreme command appeals immediately to the human mind; it is an assertion of the human mind. No honest man wants a reason why he should do right any more than why he should allow the sun to be in the heavens. The sun is there and he sees it; and joy and light and warmth come, he knows, from living under its influence. So with the idea of the universal good: to know it is to love it; to become simply aware of it is to feel it to be the true, sovereign law of our lives. And not to own it,—not to own the several forms in which it comes to us,—what is this but to make ourselves wanderers and waifs on the earth; yes, to

*Amiel, who has been called "the sweet-souled Genevan mystic," says: "It is not history which teaches righteousness to the conscience; it is conscience which teaches righteousness to history. The actual is corrupting. It is *we* who rectify it by loyalty to the ideal."

contradict the universal law of existence, since even the atoms own their attractions, even the senseless rain owns its bond to the sea whence it came. Man belongs to the idea of the universal good; he is only himself as he acts from it and for it.

Does ethics, then, give us no great thoughts? That man can respond to a universal good, that he can connect himself with the fortune of those whom he has never seen nor shall see; that he can bless in spirit unborn generations, and reach out to the world, to heal it and to lift it up,—is there nothing mystical, nothing wondrous, nothing strange about that? In truth, there is something limitless about human nature as there is about the good of which it conceives. Our souls crave a perfect good, we feel the pull thitherward, we own the law that points in that direction. Does this stir no awe, nor love, nor hope, nor fear? I know of but one thing in this world that may well excite awe; it is not any spectacle of nature, not any show of power or of beauty, but the thought of the supreme law under which we live, of the ideals that are unalterably set for us, of the perfect goal to which our inmost being tends. We are, indeed, strangers here amid these scenes, where so much meets the eye that afflicts the soul; we cannot avoid picturing our home and proper country as far away, and ourselves as travelling thitherward. What longings seize us as we think of this, what love, what hope, what fear, lest by any chance or carelessness we should lose our way! And who will say that ethics is but an affair of this world, an amenity of our earthly life? In truth, the so-called equities and amenities of this world hide as often as reveal the true principles of ethics; and these higher principles we must regard as just as good for any other world as for this. They do not so much arise here on this "bank and shore of time," as find here one field for their application. We cannot think of them as having any origin; they are not made by the gods; they are not made at all; they belong to the eternal, unchangeable nature of things.

What does religion add, then, to ethics, what greater thought does it give us than this of a law that forever encompasses us? Nothing that I can see, and what it attempts to add is, generally, at least, *Aberglaube*, superstition. Religion conceives the good in the form of a person, and asserts that he is ruling in the world. But this is an illusion, and really a harmful one. A true, sound, and wholly rational religion,—so, because containing no premises that could reasonably be doubted,—would be simply a perfected ethics.* Morality as custom, as public opinion, as law, has, I well know, to be continually revised and enlarged; and as morality may have been identified with these things, the larger ideas may refuse the name morality as tame and commonplace. But morality is in truth a principle, and the enlargement mentioned has always been on the basis of the principles of morality, and has always issued in a larger, fuller moral ideal. Religion seems also to add to morality the thought of heaven; but this, when purely conceived, is not something apart from goodness, but the triumph of goodness. We, too, as believers in the good, look for its triumph; not yet is the end and issue of things, but far away; though we know not whether these earthly selves shall ever see the triumph, though we can only think of it and know that there will be an outcome of our struggles and pains there.

But religion in the future must not only disengage itself from the mythical elements of the old religions, it must present a higher type of religion. The religions of the past have generally had a taint of selfishness about them. They have held out the hope of recompense. They have not commanded and summoned men in the name of the good and for its sake alone. They have not taken men out of themselves. I see a new religion arising, basing itself on trust in man; calling to the hitherto unstirred depths of

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*I cannot refuse the temptation to quote the reported language,—wonderful in its suggestiveness—of Mr. W. C. Gannett, at the Western Unitarian Conference, 1883: "Ethics thought out is a religious feeling. Ethics lived out begets a religious life. Are you ready for ethics? Are you prepared to know that in saying you have faith in goodness, you are saying a greater thing than in saying you have faith in God?"

loyalty in him, believing that he can love the good without thought of a reward, that he can rise superior to all the motives that ordinarily determine men, that the heaven of principle can rule in the human breast. Man's ignorance about what will become of him after he dies never disturbed a noble, a truly religious soul. It may drive the timid, the fearful,—those so anxious to know whether their poor self-centered selves are going to live again,—to despair, or to the comfort, as they call it, of the gospel and the church. Poor souls, let them have the comfort while they may. But they might live on forever and never know what true blessedness is. This they will not know till they cease to think of themselves,—whether they are to live or die,—and give themselves over to the good, and live now in the supreme eternal moments. For religion, if it means anything, binds us to a law above us and raps us out of ourselves. The religious men and women of the future will give themselves to all their dreams of the perfect without questioning or concern; they will know that they are in higher, stronger keeping than any they could themselves devise; that the blessed powers, which no man can name, contain them and enfold them; that if there is anything of worth in them, that will live, and all else they will themselves willingly let die. An ideal perfection is the only ultimate reason for existence; if we do not turn our faces thitherward, our lives, however full of shows and business and plans and works they may be, are without rational significance; and if we do, there are at bottom no more puzzles or cares or anxieties for us, in our heart of hearts there is a peace and joy, that no reverses or disappointments can ever disturb or mar.

Our "Church-Door Pulpit" hints its purpose in its name. It aims to furnish fortnightly a transfigured tract,—transfigured by being paid for, and by representing not so much a given system of beliefs as the emphasis, in somewhat varying beliefs, on "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion;" this tract to be taken from the rack or table at the church-door to the home, there to serve its little mission by reading in the family, lending to a neighbor, mailing to a distant friend, etc. We hope the plan may be destined to wide adoption by Liberal churches as part of their regular church-work.

The word "UNITY" in the title bears to the Committee who arrange the series a wide meaning, pointing more to the substance, than to the forms, of religious thought and faith; and in inviting contributions they have sought, not only through the whole range, but in both directions beyond the range, of those who bear the "Unitarian" name,—though most of the writers must naturally be found within that name. "New Orthodoxy," "New Judaism," those who care for no name but "Religion," and the "Ethical Societies," will all be represented. The choice of subject is left to the writers; and *each writer is responsible for his own utterance alone, and for nothing else in the series.* "One of your best—a life-helping sermon, or a thought-sermon reaching the life," was the invitation sent out.

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